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ABSTRACT

This paper describes five maxims for an effective faculty mentoring program developed at Western Carolina University (North Carolina) designed to increase retention of new faculty. The first maxim, "ask what the program will do for the school," emphasizes that a program should not be undertaken until this question has been specifically and thoroughly answered. This section notes that at Western Carolina University (WCU) the mentoring program was set up to help new faculty and their families. typically from urban areas, adjust to a rural southern lifestyle. A description of the second maxim, "formality follows functionality," details how the WCU planners designed the function of their program and then let the content of the elements influence their decision about administrative policies and procedures. The third maxim, "choices increase chances for compatibility," discusses the central importance of the matching procedures that bring suitable mentors and mentees together. The fourth maxim, "helpers need helping too," shows the importance of support for mentors in manuals and support groups. The final maxim, "hindsight improves foresight," discusses the value of evaluation after the program's first year of operation. Three figures are included. (JB)

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In putting together its faculty mentoring program the steering committee at WCU coined and followed five maxims. They included: (a)ask what the program will do for the school, (b)formality follows functionality, (c)choices increase chances for compatibility, (d)helpers need helping too, and (e)hindsight improves foresight. The result has been a highly successful program that participants want continued. Both inexperienced developers creating new mentoring initiatives for the first time as well as seasoned planners in the midst of fine tuning existing programs should find the maxims of practical value.

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Maxims For Mentoring

It's not another new management gimmick or high tech training gadget. For centuries mentoring has been a means of developing less experienced workers. However, only recently have some colleges and universities given the idea serious consideration. Perhaps your school is now ready to put together its very first formal mentoring plan. If so, the following maxims might help designers create a better program. They were successfully used by the Mentoring Steering Committee at a rural university in the Southeast.

Ask What The Program Will Do For The School

If your university is about to draft its maiden mentoring program it can hardly be labeled a "fad chaser" (i.e., one of those trendy schools that automatically jumps aboard the latest education craze). Chances are several hours have been spent discussing how mentoring will benefit the school. If so, planners are already following maximum one, "Ask what the program will do for the school." It is only after this question has been specificity and thoroughly answered can the actual designing of the program begin.

For Western Carolina University, an institution of higher education nestled in the Great Smoky mountains, it was very clear what it expected a new faculty mentoring program to do for the school. The program was to help the university recruit and retain quality faculty. While for the next decade the number of persons seeking faculty positions nation-wide is expected to surpass the number of vacancies available, such projections do not hold true for all academic disciplines and all regions of the country. WCU knows that finding Ph.D. replacements for

many of its retiring faculty will not be easy. Perhaps the opportunity to be mentored, combined with other incentives, will help draw highly qualified professors to Western.

Like most organizations, once the university has successfully recruited a quality employee it wants to retain her/his services for a time. Traditionally its modern campus and the beauty of the surrounding mountains have attracted many city dwellers to Western. However, once on campus some of the new hires and their families meet with difficulties adjusting to a rural southern lifestyle. Some leave only after a year or two. The hope is that having a mentor will help new faculty to better adjust to university life in the Smokies and thus lengthen their stays at Western.

What do program planners at your school think a mentoring program should do for the university? Do they want it to increase the school's competitiveness in the labor market or lower employee turnover? Perhaps they want it to be a means of teaching new employees the norms and values of the school's culture. Maybe they intend to use it to develop team leaders. The reasons for having a formal mentoring program are likely to differ from employer to employer depending upon its human resource development needs. Each organization must decide for itself what it wants mentoring to accomplish and then design a program that can achieve that end.

Formality Follows Functionality

An issue that inevitably arises when designing a mentoring program is, "How formal should we make the program?" The steering committee at Western associated "formal" with bureaucratic structures teeming with excessive controls and paper work. They worried that a highly formalized mentoring program

would dampen employee enthusiasm for mentoring. On the other hand, the committee feared that a lack of appropriate guidelines and procedures might result in the program shooting off into too many directions. They concluded that a balance between the functional elements of the program itself and supporting administrative structures was needed. To assist them in achieving such a balance the committee developed a second maxim, "Formality follows functionality."

Adhering to its second maxim the committee began fashioning the functional elements of their new program. Goals, participant responsibilities and roles (see Figures 1 and 2), matching procedures, training manual, and formative evaluation component were carefully crafted. The plan called for mentors (i.e., tenured faculty) to assist mentees (i.e., faculty new to Western but not necessarily new to university teaching) in becoming reappointed, tenured and promoted. It was reasoned that quality employees making continuous career progress were likely to remain at the university for a substantial time.

While faculty members are expected to perform well in the areas of teaching, research, and service, required levels of performance are often ambiguous and vary widely from one institution to another. New faculty hires can have difficulty in ferreting out the real (I.e., informal performance standards) from the official (i.e., written performance standards). A failure to quickly discern and meet the "real standards" can spell career disaster. Therefore, WCU mentors are instructed to assist their mentees in finding out what they must do to be considered for reappointment, tenure, and promotion.

After developing the key elements of its program, the steering committee shifted its attention to the matter of form. It was agreed that the program would be made no formal that what was necessary for it to accomplish its goals. For example, the program would be completely voluntary (i.e., any faculty member could join or leave the program at any time with no questions asked). The

committee believed that employees did not want to be told they "had to" mentor new colleagues, fill out more forms in triplicate, and attend endless meetings. On the other hand, they suspected that faculty would welcome an opportunity to be mentors provided they received something in return. They were right! In its first year of operation the program attracted twice as many volunteer mentors than it did mentees. For volunteering, mentors received official recognition for their service, enjoyed socials where good food was plentiful, and gained one very good friend.

Many planners would concur, mentoring programs require both function and form. That is they need clearly identified elements such as goals and participant responsibilities as well as administrative policies and procedures. However, planners often disagree on how formal to make a mentoring program. By following the maxim "formality follows form" the WCU steering committee first designed the functional of their program and then let the content of the elements influence their decisions about administrative policies and procedures. They believe the strategy has helped them to achieve an appropriate level of formality.

Choices Increases Chances For Compatibility

When acquiring mentors, WCU mentees are given choices. They are afforded the option of either finding their own mentor or having the steering committee match them with a suitable mentor. When registering for the program, participants are asked to state their preferences regarding the gender, school, department, and subject matter interests of their mentoring partners. The steering committee holds that permitting mentees and mentors to make such

choices increases the university' chances for arranging compatible mentoring relationships.

The committee uses participants' preferences as criteria for matching purposes. An example is the use of mentees' and mentors' role preferences. After participants rank order their preferences for six mentoring roles (see Figure 2), their three most preferred roles are used to form a mentoring code. If a prospective mentee rank orders advising, coaching, and sponsoring as her/his three top preferences, the resulting mentoring code becomes ACS (A=advisor, C=coach, S=sponsor). An attempt is made to match her/him with a mentor having a similar code. For the sake of open communications no mentee is paired with an individual who formally appraises her/his job performance.

Since compatibility between the mentee and mentor is essential in any successful mentoring relationship, the importance of reliable matching procedures can hardly be overstated. Developing such procedures may be the most important and most challenging task program planners face. To date, seventy-five percent of the mentoring participants at WCU report they and their mentoring partners are "very well matched." The steering committee attributes this high level of compatibility to its matching procedures.

Helpers Need Helping Too

When the steering committee closely examined its pool of volunteer mentors several important facts became evident. None of the volunteers had any formal mentoring experience. Several individuals weren't sure what mentors were supposed to do. Others questioned whether they possessed the necessary qualities to be effective mentors. From all indications it appeared that the "helpers needed helping too."

The initial help came in the form of a training program covering a wide range of topics. It was important that mentors understand the purpose of the program, their responsibilities and roles, and the nature of mentoring relationships. They also needed some coaching on how to be good helpers. Through brief discussions, role plays, and small group activities, participants gained an understanding of what being a mentor was all about. Among other things they learned that good mentors engage in active listing, communicate accurate understanding, are respectful to mentees, and maintain confidentiality.

A 27 page mentoring manual serves as a general resource for mentors and mentees alike. Along with information covered during the training, the manual contains supplementary materials to be used at participants' discretion. For example, it contained tips on goal setting, ways of involving the mentee's boss in the mentoring process, and methods for analyzing an university's culture. Included are a variety of practical and concrete ideas from which participants can select items they consider to be potentially helpful. For example, one section contains a list of sample activities for each of the six mentoring roles mentioned earlier (see abbreviated list in Figure 3).

During the program's first year of operation ongoing help and support were provided participants through monthly "rap sessions." On such occasions, parties lounged about drinking coffee and eating cookies. They swapped mentoring stories telling one another what activities worked and which failed. Mutual concerns were discussed. Steering committee members fielded questions. Group sizes were small and relaxed, making it easy for anyone to say what was on her/his mind. Everyone was supportive and learned from one another.

Hindsight Improves Foresight

The final maxim coined and followed by the steering committee was, "Hindsight improves foresight." It contains the notion that a look backwards increases one's ability to see ahead. Therefore, one year after coming into existence the committee gazed into its rear view mirror. They wanted to see where they had been. Members hoped that they were on the right path but didn't know for certain that they were. If they had somehow strayed off course or if the route they had chosen wasn't leading to the desired destination, program adjustments would be made.

The look backwards came largely in the form of a survey. Every participant in the program received and returned a specially prepared questionnaire. Written responses from mentees and mentors revealed valuable information the fledgling program. For example, partners meet an average of 11 times during the academic year. Meetings usually lasted for an hour, took place over lunch, and were evenly initiated by mentees and mentors. Eighty-three percent of the mentees felt that their mentors were competent and provided them the assistance they needed. All the mentors felt that their mentees took full responsibility for their own career development. Ninety-two percent of the participants felt that the mentoring program should be continued.

As for the ultimate success of Western's mentoring project (i.e., its contribution to the recruiting and retention of quality faculty), it is too early to make a judgment. Future inquires into what attracted faculty to Western and comparisons between faculty with and without mentors will be undertaken. Concerning ways to improve the program, participants have suggested holding more social events, having more mentees and mentors from which to choose partners, and achieving closer matches with respect to academic disciplines.

Summary

In putting together its faculty mentoring program the steering committee at WCU coined and followed five maxims. They included: (a)ask what the program will do for the school, (b)formality follows functionality, (c)choices increase chances for compatibility, (d)helpers need helping too, and (e)hindsight improves foresight. The result has been a highly successful program that participants want continued. Both inexperienced developers creating new mentoring initiatives for the first time as well as seasoned planners in the midst of fine tuning existing programs should find the maxims of practical value.

Figure 1: Participant Responsibilities

Mentor Responsibilities	Mentee Responsibilities
• Be available to provide mentees the type of assistance they most need and desire. • Attend mentor orientation and training sessions. • Work toward the overall goals of the program. • Act in accordance with the general guiding principles of the program. • Provide the Steering Committee outcomes information regarding the program.	• Take charge of own learning, actively solicit desired information and feedback, and be willing to openly share thoughts with mentors. • Attend mentee orientation and training sessions. • Work toward the overall goals of the program. • Act in accordance with the general guiding principles of the program. • Provide the Steering Committee outcomes information regarding the program.

Figure 2: Mentor Roles

Advisor (Helps mentee set and achieve career goals)
- •Help mentee clarify career interests, competencies, & values
- •Assist the mentee in setting specific career goals
- •Jointly develop strategies for achieving career objectives

Coach (Helps mentee meet job performance norms)
- •Model exemplary teaching, research, & service
- •Share effective & efficient teaching, research & service practices
- •Provide feedback regarding the mentee's job performance

Explainer (Provides mentee information on policies & procedures)
- •Inform mentee on the nature of the university's culture
- •Tutor mentee on how to get things done in the university
- •Assist mentee with routine paper work and procedures

Protector (Helps mentee avoid costly career mistakes)
- •Point out things which might reflect negatively on mentee
- •Maintain good relationship between mentee & their department head
- •Agree to no-fault conclusion of mentoring relationship

Sponsor (Helps the mentee secure positions & assignments)
- •Make introductions to influential people in the university
- •Make recommendations for assignments & advancement
- •Publicly praise the mentee's accomplishments & abilities

Validator (Provides mentee psychological support during transition)
- •Make the mentee feel welcome and a part of the university
- •Serve as a confident offering reassurances and encouragement
- •Assist the mentee in resolving crisis situations

Figure 3: Sample Mentoring Activities

Advising	Coaching	Explaining
•**Personal Development Plan** Help mentee create a 3-5 year professional development plan. Include goals for teaching, research, & service. •**The Obstacle Course** Jointly list obstacles preventing mentee from accomplishing her/his goals. Develop strategies for overcoming each. •**Referral Agent** Tell mentee whom to see & where to go for expert help.	•**Performance Feedback** Provide mentee informal feedback on her/his job performance. •**Reality Check** Assist mentee in answering the question, "How am I perceived around here?" •**Career Management Skill** Help mentee build skills in such areas as time management, negotiations, communications, & career politics.	•**Form Filling** With copies of completed forms as examples, show mentee how to fill out the most frequently used forms. •**Test Driving The Equipment** Aid mentee as she/he tries out unfamiliar office & computer equipment. •**Adding Structure** Mentor draws chart of formal & informal university structures, explains work flow & decision paths.
Protecting	**Sponsoring**	**Validating**
•**Determining What's Sacrosanct** Help mentee to identify which norms must be met to be reappointed, tenured, & promoted. •**Policy Clarification** Make mentee aware of important policies regarding teaching, travel, grant administration, publishing, etc. •**Documentation** Assist mentee in determining what needs to be documented, e.g., travel expenses & how best to document them.	•**Nominating** After discovering mentee's interests & special skills, nominate her/him to serve on an appropriate committee. •**Special Invite** Invite mentee to attend a meeting of a committee or special project team of which you are a member. •**Letter of Recommendation** When appropriate, write mentee a letter recommending them for reappointment, tenure, promotion, and/or a university office.	•**Another Pea To Share A Pod** Upon finding out about mentee's professional & personal interests, introduce her/him to someone with similar interests. •**Accommodation Secrets** Get a group of mentees together & discuss common strategies for adjusting to life in a new university and/or community. •**Anniversary Celebration** Mark mentee's first, second, or sixth month anniversary at the school with a visit to a favorite club.